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2. (Amended) Apparatus for deep fat frying of food items comprising:  
a cooking vessel including first and second opposed upright end walls each having respective upper and lower edges, first and second opposed upright sidewalls each having respective upper and lower edges, and a bottom wall extending between the end walls and the side walls to provide a vessel adapted for retaining a quantity of a cooking medium therein, said bottom wall including first and second sloping wall surfaces diverging and downwardly extending from an elongated central raised portion, said central raised portion longitudinally extending between said end walls; and  
a heater support assembly including a frame and an elongated heating element, said frame being complementally configured to said cooking vessel for resisting horizontal movement of the cooking vessel relative to the frame and for removably supporting said cooking vessel above said heating element with the central raised portion being in spaced relationship directly above and in vertical alignment with said elongated heating element,  
wherein said frame includes an upright retaining member adjacent said cooking vessel side walls and end walls when said cooking vessel is received in said frame, and wherein said cooking vessel side walls and end walls are complementally sized and configured relative to said frame whereby said frame receives said cooking vessel inside said retaining member only with said central raised portion positioned in vertical alignment with said elongated heating element.

A3 7. (Amended) Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 2, wherein said heating element is an elongated gas burner.

158 (Amended) Apparatus for deep fat frying of food items comprising:

a cooking vessel including first and second opposed upright end walls each having respective upper and lower edges, first and second opposed upright sidewalls each having respective upper and lower edges, and a bottom wall extending between the end walls and the side walls to provide a vessel adapted for retaining a quantity of a cooking medium therein, said bottom wall including first and second sloping wall surfaces diverging and downwardly extending from an elongated central raised portion, said central raised portion longitudinally extending between said end walls; and

a heater support assembly including a frame and an elongated heating element, said frame being complementally configured to said cooking vessel for resisting horizontal movement of the cooking vessel relative to the frame and for removably supporting said cooking vessel above said heating element with the central raised portion being in spaced relationship directly above and in vertical alignment with said elongated heating element,

wherein said heating element is adjustably mounted to said frame for positioning in one of a plurality different locations at different vertical spacing relative to the central raised portion of the cooking vessel when the cooking vessel is received on the frame.

9. (Amended) Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 2, wherein said central raised portion is an elongated ridge extending between said end walls and is located substantially equidistant from said side walls.

10. (Amended) Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 2, wherein said sloping wall surfaces have a slope relative to the horizontal of between about  $4^\circ$  and about  $30^\circ$ .

A<sup>4</sup> 12. (Amended) Apparatus for deep fat frying of food items comprising:  
a cooking vessel including first and second opposed upright end walls each having respective upper and lower edges, first and second opposed upright sidewalls each having respective upper and lower edges, and a bottom wall extending between the end walls and the side walls to provide a vessel adapted for retaining a quantity of a cooking medium therein, said bottom wall including first and second sloping wall surfaces diverging and downwardly extending from an elongated central raised portion, said central raised portion longitudinally extending between said end walls; and  
a heater support assembly including a frame and an elongated heating element, said frame being complementally configured to said cooking vessel for resisting horizontal movement of the cooking vessel relative to the frame and for removably supporting said cooking vessel above said heating element with the central raised portion being in spaced relationship directly above and in vertical alignment with said elongated heating element,  
wherein said cooking vessel includes a perforate grate positioned in an elevated position relative to the outboard edge of the sloping wall surfaces to define a cooking zone thereabove.

A<sup>5</sup> 15. (Amended) Deep fat frying apparatus as set forth in claim 2, wherein said side walls are substantially perpendicular to said end walls and wherein said side walls have a length and said end walls have a width, the length of said side walls being greater than the width of said end walls.

AC 19. (Amended) A cooking vessel as set forth in claim 20, wherein said lower edges of said side walls and end walls extend below said outboard edges of said sloping wall surfaces.

§ 20. (Amended) A cooking vessel adapted for deep fat frying after positioning over a heating element and for receiving a quantity of a cooking medium and at least one food item therein, said cooking vessel comprising:

a pair of upright opposed end walls each having a respective upper edge and a respective lower edge;

a pair of upright opposed side walls oriented substantially perpendicular to the end walls, each of the side walls having a respective upper edge and a respective lower edge; and

a bottom wall extending between the end walls and the side walls to provide a vessel adapted to contain a cooking medium therein, said bottom wall including first and second sloping wall surfaces each having a respective outboard edge and an elongated central raised portion extending between said end walls, said first and second sloping wall surfaces extending outwardly and downwardly from said central raised portion toward respective side walls,

wherein said bottom wall includes a pair of longitudinally extending troughs oriented substantially parallel to said central raised portion and extending below said outboard edges of said sloping wall surfaces, said troughs each including an upright barrier wall opposite and inboard of said side walls and extending downwardly from said outboard edges of respective ones of said sloping wall surfaces; and